Currently Existing Supports

Every school in the state of lowa has some non-academic supports in place to help students overcome barriers to their learning. To often however, these supports are disjointed and are in competition with one another for the limited resources of the school.

For example, a well-intended school staff may start out the school year by implementing a new program or organizing a group to focus on a specific issue or problem. This new program or service overshadows projects from previous years that now begin to suffer from lack of attention. That lack of attention causes old problems to resurface. The new efforts are effective at first but because they place an additional strain on an already overloaded system and the initial success becomes difficult to maintain. Staff become disheartened as their time is torn between the work of the program/committee, addressing unmet needs of students, and their ultimate desire to do a better job of teaching.

An organized system of learning supports is needed to ensure that efforts to meet student needs are needed, effective, and not in conflict with other programs or services. An infrastructure must be organized that allows staff to review data, prioritize needs, implement change, and measure impact – similar to what is done with student achievement in reading and math. Reading and math should not be in competition with one another – neither should the supports that are needed to ensure that students are ready to learn reading and math.

The following tools are examples designed to help schools look at existing efforts as a whole. The goal is to support student learning more efficiently by ensuring that all efforts are well aligned, coordinated, and focused.

Tool 1: Looking at Staff Assignments -- The following is one example of how a "typical" elementary school might think about staff assignments to develop a more streamlined and efficient structure for using existing resources of staff time.

Typical Elementary School Anywhere District, Iowa

List of current committee work

| Committee, Team, Advisory, | What is the purpose for the | What is the desired outcome | Targeted student population | Staff Involved (# of FTE) | Additional Resources |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| or Group | group? | of their work? | | | (Space, time, materials, etc.) |
| Building/ School Improvement Team | To review student achievement data and set priorities for improvements | All students will achieve at high rates in reading and math | All students with special attention given to those not meeting proficiency | 12 staff meet monthly + preparation & follow-up = ½ FTE | Professional development/staff meeting time = 5 total hours of PD time @ month |
| Building Assistance Team (BAT or Child Study) | To support students with learning problems | Students with problems will learn at the same rate as students without learning problems | Students who are referred to the BAT | 6 staff meet 2 times per week to develop plans for students and do follow-up | Occasional expenses tied to interventions/ family interventions / contacts with agencies outside the school |
| Positive Behavioral Supports Team | To improve student behavior by creating a consistent, supportive environment | All students will follow the rules, office referrals will decrease, and behavior will improve | All students, especially those with behavior concerns | 6 staff meet weekly to review data, implementation, and progress | (After PD for year 1 implementation) 1 hour @ month of staff meeting time to review data |
| Wellness Team | etc. | | | | |
| Social Committee | | | | | |
| Curriculum Committee | | | | | |
| Professional Development Study Team | | | | | |
| Textbook Adoption Committee | | | | | |
| Etc. | | | | | |

These are some examples of typical teams and committees that meet regularly to improve conditions and support student learning. Once schools begin to look at the multiple projects and initiatives that exist, they often find that some will overlap with others in content, outcome, and/or personnel. The goal of using a tool such as this is to see where the overlaps and gaps exist and have discussions about ways to lessen the burdens of staff while maintaining the level of supports that exist. Essentially, this is an exercise in "down-sizing" or identifying those things that can be stopped.

Tool 2: Looking at Programs and Services – The following "mapping" tool is intended to help schools and districts collectively look at their programs and services to determine overlap or gaps in learning supports. Once completed, this mapping tool could be used with student achievement data to determine priorities for future improvements.

This particular tool uses the lowa framework of learning supports so that schools can identify what supports exist in each "content area" (e.g. Supports for Instruction, Safe Environments, Transitions, Youth Engagement, Family Involvement, and Community Partnerships). It is important to understand that all these supports are needed to form a comprehensive continuum of supports to ensure student success in school. While it is important to note that all these elements must be present, it is also important to mention that *it is not the role of the school to provide all of these supports*. Schools must collaboratively work with their families, neighborhoods and communities to build and maintain a continuum.

The first column asks for research-based strategies and an evaluation measure. All strategies should be listed so that all efforts are accurately reflected. Similarly, all strategies should be evaluated for quality of implementation as well as for results. This will help provide data to make decisions about what should continue, what else is needed, and what should be stopped. For more information on evaluation, performance measures and results go to <u>Guiding Practices</u> (<u>Guiding Practices</u> 2.0 Intro).

Note to Julie: Insert tool 2 on the next page here as a pdf.
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Resource Map for

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